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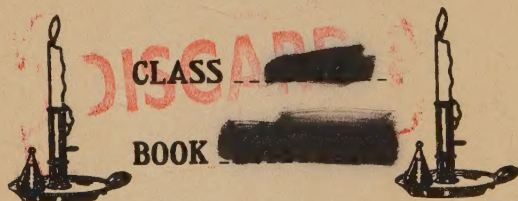
The hermit thrush, poems by Kathleen Mill



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STEPHENS COLLEGE



L I B R A R Y

COLUMBIA, MO.

THE HERMIT THRUSH



THE HERMIT
THRUSH



Poems by
Kathleen Millay



New York
HORACE LIVERIGHT
1929

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KATHLEEN MILLAY

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***H**EAR me, hear me,
All ye lonely,
I've a hearth as lone as thine,
I've a song
For singing only
To a heart as lone as mine.*

Moth

THEY have wondered at my wings
Till I can no longer fly;
Here I beat upon the wall—
Let me, let me by!
Here is not for such as I!
Where no one has ever laughed
And will not, will not cry.

Catacombs

WANT is too deep within me,
I can not find where it hides;
It aches and cries and beats upon my heart,
And I sit on and wait and weep to hear it.
And ever and again I must go down
To hunt the endless darks of my desire,
Calling aloud for want to answer me;
Halting at every step to hark and hear
If now at last perchance its tortured cry
Be nearer to my hand,
Pausing forever lest I pass it by—
It is too deep, too deep,
I wait and weep and call and hark to hear it—
It is too deep,
I can not bring it up into the light.

Garden

STONE by stone a wall was builded
High about her blooming years,
Here's the need that stilled her laughter,
Here's the pride that stayed her tears;
Here's the creed that crushed a song
And left the dust of dead desire;
Here's the dread that marks the burning
Of a buried fire;
Stone by stone the wall was builded,
Stone of greed and stone of might,
Shielding bloom that never yielded
Anything but blight.

The Shadow Bird

WHEN I was young and put to bed,
 (If I remember right)
Outside the window by my head
There was a bird that had been dead,
And cried the livelong night;
I can't remember what he said,
Or how I knew his breast was red,
He would be gone when it was light—
I think I never saw him, quite.

Little Brown Girl

LITTLE Brown Girl, with the wide, wide eyes,
What are you thinking and what do you see—?
With the thin brown arms and the long long legs
That climb so high in the cherrywood tree!

Little Brown Girl on the sunlit sands,
That sits so still by the shifting tide—
What do you want as the sun goes down
And what do you dream as the seagulls ride?

With your laggard feet and your frightened hands,
What are you wanting and what have you found
As the seagulls cry and the stars are wide
And the world goes round?

Little Brown Girl with the fearless song,
With the laughing throat and the flying hair—
What do you ask that the world can give
And the heart can bear?

With your sorry tears and your hungry eyes—
What are you hunting and what would you see?
Little Brown Girl with the silent heart
That I used to be.

Spring Song

I DO not sing because the warmth of spring is in the air,
But for the chill of winter in my soul;
I know the nesting of the birds about me everywhere,
I see the wary woodchuck lift his head above the hole;
The ploughboy follows to the plough,
The farmer calls the waiting herds,
The growing bud is clinging to the wall;
But in the winter of my soul
I watch the frightened birds
Fly southward down the frozen sky of fall.

SEVEN MOODS OF A MORNING

Coward

NOW that the sun is shining bright
And night has passed away,
I will explain that my delight
As in your arms I lay,
Was but a mood of one not quite
Herself, for lack of day.

Bereavement

YOU took my little laughing vice
And left it out in all the rain;
My little vice caught cold and died,
And I live on in hushèd pain—
And listen for its laugh again.

Ignorance

WHEN I was but a young thing,
And wise for want of years,
I said, "I'll keep my laughter
And give the world my tears!"
When I was but a young thing,
And brave for want of fears.

WANT is want no matter what the reason,
Tears are tears no matter why we cry;
Killed for love or killed for coward treason,
Death is death no matter how we die.

Inheritance

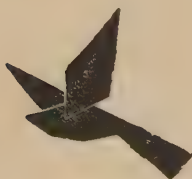
IN all this world of fretful age
There is no place for the likes of me—
A wild thing born in a frugal cage,
And never let go free
To find where the wild things flee.

Cure

AND, after a while, in place of pain,
Dead desire lived again—
Only to wonder why
Life did not let it die.

Astrologer

WHILE the blush of the early morning
Reds the path of the nimble goat,
I will climb up the crimson mountain
To find the sun on the sail of a boat!



Love Children

MY songs are the madness of life,
I can not make them;
They are the grieving born of a wild disgrace;
They are the dreaming of death,
I can not wake them—
Only my weeping knows of their hiding place.

Inventory

WHEN the shadows close forever
Round the candle's weary flame,
And our frightened eyes look hungrily
Back down the road we came,
What will we find to comfort us
For forfeiting the game?

Will we pause beside the dignity
Of duty's caravans,
Or will we see the fluttering
Of little painted fans,
And a crystal wine glass glistening
Among the pots and pans?

The Curious One

BECAUSE the sap of life rides high
In my unquenchèd veins,
Because my feet are none too firm
Upon the fluid mold,
Because I bend and twist and writhe
Beneath the lash of mighty rains,
I am too early grown, you say,
And sure will be too early old—
But look you far across the fields
Where living summer turns to gold!
And look you high across the hills
Where summer turns to dying fall—
The trees beside the flowing brook
Are growing green and very tall,
The trees upon the solid rock
Are yellow first of all.

Song Bird

SHE lived among her garden ways,
Like a bird that loves to sing,
Time to her was but the days
Flowers took for blossoming,
The world was just a place for spring.

But she learned a singing bird
Can not breathe the winter's breath,
And beating wings will not be heard
Against the wings of death.

Sage

I AM not old as age is told
In counting up the years,
But I have wept and age has leapt
Upon me with my tears.

Kin

STRANGE, queer things are akin to me—
Winds that cry in the beechwood tree,
Mists that drift and drag and rise,
The blood-red moon in the leaden skies,
Storms that shatter the sultry sea,
Knots that gnarl in the beechwood tree—
Strange queer things are akin to me.

Black and White

BY day we are a thousand masks,
We look warily upon our faces,
And are afraid of the light;
But in the dark of night
We are what we are—
A little part of the stars.

Lodgekeeper

SIT you here a while, my friend,
Rest you here while the west is clearing;
Many's the weary mile, my friend,
And long's the road with never an end,—
Rest you here a while, my friend—
And the end will still be nearing.

Changeling

I FOUND a frightened elfin child,
Too old in all but years,
I asked her why so fair a face
Was heavy of its fears,
She'd been afraid to laugh, she said,
For years and years and years,
For every laugh she'd ever laughed
Had always turned to tears.

WHY is it not enough to sit and look at beauty
On a night like this?

The trees are black against the pallid sky,
Long shadow hills stretch down to the silver sea,—
Why is it not enough, why is it not enough
To watch the clouds that wander, wander ceaselessly
Across the thin white wraith of the moon?
Why must I want to wander, too?

Owl

LEAVE your fires that burn so bright,
Here's my hand and let's be going!
For the night is black and the moon is white
And a mighty wind's a-blowing!
And we'll watch the clouds sail out to sea,
And we'll hear the wind in the linden tree,
And we'll find the daylight growing!

Look-out

THERE is no rest within me—
How can I wait

Forever

On this unfrequented shore,
And watch the thin white sails
Of far off ships

Go down the distant trail

Of my horizon,

And leave me here

Alone

Forevermore,

And know me not

Forever,

Who knew me not before?

The Natural Fruit Tree

ALREADY are the small green apples
Growing on the healthy tree
Where lovely flowers were a week ago;
So soon, so soon, my happy hour
Hangs a bitter memory,
For fairest blooming bears a fruit
Not worth the time it takes to grow.

Fay

KISS her sad eyes and make them laugh—
She was not born for weeping!
Truth is a wine she might not quaff,
Look in her eyes and make them laugh,
Tell her her dreams are worth the keeping—
She was not made for weeping.

Afternoon Tea

WE'LL sit and talk of things we are not of;
The need there is of rain, the price of coal,
The negro tenor we heard sing last week,
The swimming of the goldfish in the bowl.
The singer will remind you of the song
You heard a nightingale sing long ago;
The shining goldfish circling slowly round
Will make me see a sunset on the snow;
And you will think your thoughts and I'll think mine,
And we will say the fish are pretty so.

And you will think I do not see the touch
Of your strong fingers nervous on your knees;
You will not know I have been hurt so much
I am afraid to talk of things like these.

Tide

I MUST go down where the sea is resounding,
I am too far from the sound of the sea;
I must be near where the waters are pounding
A plaint that will never be letting me be!
I must go back where the waves are returning
Ever and ever on shore's that are lone,
I am too far from the seas that are burning
Ever and ever on hearts that have known—
Shallows in ledges are echoes of stone.

Choice

SHALL I be a thriving
Tough and greedy weed,
Or a lovely garden
Gone to lifeless seed?

Adventure

STRANGE things were seen in the woods that night,
Strange sounds were heard from the hill,
And at my feet my hound dog growled
And then was strangely still—
A shadow fell athwart the moon
When there was never a cloud in sight,
And the stars were dull against the dark,
And then were strangely bright.

Axiom

WHO would live to learn of truth
Must live to learn of sorrow,
Who would know of naught but youth
Had best be dead tomorrow.

Puppet

PULLED suddenly too many ways,
She writhed into a gnarl—
The careless hands that held the strings
Had somehow let them snarl.

Vulture

FEAR has found me out again,
Walking with me on the road;
Hungry harbinger of pain
Threatening my bright abode;

Wheeling round and round my door,
Casting circles on the light;
Making what has been before
Hide the day and find the night.

Grab Bag

COME one, come all,
There's something here for each of you!
There's fun for them that want to laugh,
And tears for who would cry!
A musty fan, a punctured ball—
There's nothing out of reach of you,
Only a piece of tattered chaff,
And bits of rag that none would buy,
And words the wind has blown awry.
Come one, come all, '
A shattered tree that once was tall,
A broken wing that used to fly
And dreams that towered high
Upon the empty sky;
Come who would live
Come who would die—
'Twill do no harm to try!

Pilgrimage

I'LL walk with you in April
When the spring is in the air,
We'll count the boughs are budding,
And we'll talk with little care—
We will not think of winter
When the frozen boughs are bare.

I'll walk with you in summer
When the sun is on the mere,
We'll mark a sparrow flying,
And we'll laugh with little fear—
We will not think of winter
When the frozen sun is here.

I'll walk with you in autumn
When the rainbow haunts the hill,
We'll watch the color falling,
And we'll both be very still—
For we'll know what we are thinking
When the heavy harvest yields,
And winter winds a frozen trail
Through late October's fields.

Vagabond!

GO and find them! I can not tell you!
How can you see in a simple phrase
The lowly huts with the hills behind them,
The ragged trees and the maddened ways
That jagged twist and turn and wind them
In and out of the pallid haze?
I can not show you! Go and find them!
Leave your homes with the hopes behind them,
Take the road and the laggard days
And the faith of the mist and the winding ways!

To a One Time Friend

DOWN the white dust of distant memory,
Thin on the wings of far removed time,
I watch you come—a thing that used to be,
A drift of seeming and a dream sublime.

Thin on the wings of far off memory,
Soft on the winds of ways I used to go—
A lovely laughter crying upon me
Across the dark I can not help but see,
Across the night of what I have to know.

Lost

ONCE she sang of little things
Of gentle things and lonely,
The boiling of the kettle
And the starmoss on the wall;
Once she sang of simple things,
But now she's knowing only
The rich brocades and laces
That she never loved at all—
Who used to sing of little things,
And starmoss on the wall.

To Isadora Duncan

SO soon—and you are but a legend
For the weak to wonder over!
Strong and brave and beautiful
You went your ways alone.
But your live body hurt and free
Is a truth there's one won't be forgetting—
You were a path to follow down
Through a dark where none could see.

To an Unknown Grave

OH, bit of earth where a grief has been,
I give you tears that another gave,
And weep for a mother I have not seen,
A soul bereft and a' soul to save—
Oh, lovely ivy growing green
Above a very little grave!

To Joseph Stella

FROM your coat of many colors,
Silken starlight, green and blue,
Woven sunlight, gold and scarlet,
From your dream of rainbow hue,
Web of moonlight, silver blue—
You have forged your mystic arrows,
You have carved your fragile bow,
You have sent the breath of beauty
Through the world of death and snow;
You have caught the falling torrent,
You have stayed the birds in flight,
You have made the mighty lightning
Strike forever through the night.

Siege

BLACK across the gleaming train tracks,
Bleak above the dismal swamp,
Where the stark and sooty smoke stacks
Belch their spleen against the sky;

Where the puddles thick and slimy
Find the sunset gold and crimson,
Stagnant blue and green and grimy,
Film of ooze and sheen of mold;

Where the snorting engine fires
Spit against the fading daylight,
Twisted tangled reach of wires
Sinking in the growing night;

Far above the screech and whining
Where the smoke is climbing highest,
Silver still and silver shining
Venus holds the lonely sky!

St. Stephen's Green

UNDERNEATH the water-lily,
Underneath the fern;
Getting near to nine o'clock—
Did I hear that poppy talk?
Did that dandelion turn
To watch the guard go down the walk?
Soft behind the purple thistle,
Still behind the Grecian urn;
Tick tock, tick tock,
Turn the key within the lock—
Dark beneath the purple thistle,
Dark beneath the purple dock.

Painting

THE blood-red death of the blighted sun,
A leaden day that is dragging by,
And a ragged and unearthly tree
Gone mad against the sky.

Silence

THERE'S a queerness in the air tonight,
A quiet not quite still,
An unheard laughter calling
To the echo on the hill,
An unseen mill wheel turning
Where there used to be a mill.

Devil Weed!

THE fields of orange Devil Weed
Are like a million suns!
Yet the thrifty neighbors say
It kills the crops and it hurts the hay
And would to God it would go away!
Heigh-ho! And the De'il's to pay!
The Devil's sent us a million suns!

Life Everlasting

HERE'S a thought for feast and fasting!
Pretty, pretty Poverty Weed!

Life that's poor is everlasting—

There's a food for thought and fasting,

There's a cure for all contrasting!—

Pretty, pretty Poverty Weed!

Song of the Wind in the Grass

THERE'S nothing in the world so soft
As when the wind is in the grass,
It is an unseen brush that waves
A wild mermaid's hair—
A mermaid's sea-green hair;
It is a pipe for songs that pass,
It is a dryad's looking glass,
It is a shining garment for a fairy queen to wear.

Farewell

THEN, good-bye, Sweet Killarney,
Sure my heart will be pain
Till my feet will be turning
To find you again;
To be climbing your reeks
In the ways that I know,
And to wind your black lakes
Through the Gap of Dunloe;
I'll be hearing you cry
Through the mist and the rain,
I'll be wanting to laugh
Till I'm with you again.

Snow Birds .

LITTLE birds of wintertime,
It's good of you to stay;
All the other birds have flown
To find where flowers grow.
Little birds of wintertime,
Don't ever fly away!
It would be lonely
With no little footprints on the snow.

To a Dragonfly

GOLDEN rainbow in the sunshine,
Silver rainbow in the shade;
Swiftly flying, swiftly resting,
Amber, ebony and jade;
Like a shadow on the blossom,
Like a ghost upon the blade;
You have known the mighty music
That the Pipes of Pan have played.

To a Tree Blown Down by the Wind

COULD you laugh against the world no longer,
Lifting your proud head above the blast?
Trees that bend before the wind are stronger,
They'll be standing when the storm is past,
Bowing heads are laughing heads at last.

To a Lion in a Parisian Furrier's Window

AND by what right of a mighty rod
Do we find you here!
Your sightless eyes forever blazing
On a foe you never met;
Your angry fangs in silent rage
Forever set;
And on your furied claws
The little tag that sells you dear!

And by what jest of a jealous god
Have you found you here?
What startled sound of prowling crept
Into the restless sleep you slept,
What flaming leap has your body leapt
To meet whatever might be near—
Into the night that brought you here?

The Poor Little Goat Down in Glengarriff Bay!

ONCE upon a time a little black goat
Was rowed to an isle in a little flat boat,
To a lone little isle out in Glengarriff Bay,
And the goat went ashore, and the boat went away;
And the boat went away while the goat was asleep,
And it left him alone where there weren't any sheep;
Where there weren't any cows and there weren't any hogs,
And there weren't any cats and there weren't any dogs;
And there weren't any hens and there weren't any lice,
And there weren't any men and there weren't any mice;
And there wasn't a barn and there wasn't a boat—
Just a bare little isle and a black little goat.

The Unrepentent

“**I**F you were young again,” said they,
“You’d live your life a diff’rent way.”
“Not I!” I cried. “Not I! Not I!”

“You’d not be up till two or three,
“And lean your life against a tree,
“You’d try to be as good as we.”
“Not I!” I cried. “Not I! Not I!”

“The life I lived was not so sad,
“It was the only life I had;
“If I were young I’d be as bad
“As I!” I cried, “At least, I’d try!”

Refusal

GO thy way, my Loving Lad,
Prithee, go thy way!
Here there's nothing to be had,
E'en the very winds are bad,
Best be gone and best be glad,
Here there's naught will pay,
Neither night nor day,
Neither crops nor hay,
Here there's naught to make thee stay,
Prithee, go thy way!

Wend thy way a-laughing, Lad,
Win thy way with laughter!
Singing songs is not so bad,
Best be gone and best be glad,
Here there's nothing to be had,
Wend thy way with laughter!
Minstreling is not so mad,
Being daft is dafter!
Go thy way with laughter,
I'll be coming after!

Wise Man

YOU learned your learning from things in books,
And I got mine by the madness tree;
You read the way a wanting looks
Deep deep down in the likes of me;
You read the reason a baby cries,
You read the light in a lady's eyes—
But you never could find why the laughter dies
Deep deep down in the likes of me,
Who learned to live by the madness tree.

Refrain

I'M going out of my head with small things,
Too many small things, not enough big things,
Over and over and over and over,
Rumble the small things, tumbling and jumbling,
Why people say things and what they are thinking of,
Why did she do that and why did he say that,
Over and over and over and over,
Rumble the small things, tumble the little things,
I'm going out of my head with small things,
Over and over and over and over.

David and Goliath

STICKS and stones may break our bones,
And still the ticking of the clock,
But words can break a thousand times
The heart that once was whole;
'Tis only drops of water falling
Can exhaust the solid rock,
And only words can drip forever
Till they kill the singing soul.

Peter

GOLDEN gleams the mighty portal,
Snugly fits my little key;
Get ye back, ye may not enter!
Here is not for such as ye!

Now forever and forever
Still another I shall see
In the million million million
Burning up because of me.

God, take back Your mighty burden!
Let some other turn the key.
Burned in Hell I'd rather be!

Allegra

BABES unborn will know my name,
I who have no name at all;
Songs unsung will sing my fame,
Who never knew the Sacred Nine;

In a cloister where I came
To drink another's bitter gall,
And cleanse me of another's shame—
I weep my tears of bitter brine,
And die a death is really mine.

Persephone

OH, she was like a friendly calm
Upon the troubled waters,
The laughter of a sudden sun
Upon a somber day!
Oh, she was quite the loveliest
Of all Demetra's daughters,
A maid too fair to wander far
Across the fields of May!
Oh, Mother, Mother, watch your child!
She is too far away
Beyond the fields of May!

Oh, Mother busy with your care,
The God of Doom has found her there!
The God of Death has found her fair,
And taken her away,
To light the Darkness of Despair
Beyond the Tomb of Day.
Oh, never let her stay!

Oh, never, never leave her there,
Your lovely Daughter of Despair,
She is too frightened to be fair,
She is too lonely to be gay.
Oh, do not let her stay—
Mother, take your child away.

Mary Speaks

MIGHTY Father of us all,
What can ail my gentle child?
He has wandered far from home
Into lands I do not know;
He has told the whispering world
Things were wondrous strange to me;
He has said he knew me not
When I sought him, sorrowing.
Mighty Father of us all,
I have kept within my heart
Things I did not understand,
I have wept my quiet tears
Through the long and waiting days;
Through the dark and silent nights,
I have prayed to know the time
My child would have a need of me.
But tonight, oh, Mighty God,
I do not know what to do,
I do not know what to pray,
Thinking of my gentle child.
He has said, oh, Mighty God,
He has said that You are kind;
He has said, "Be not afraid.
"God is Love, be not afraid.
"He is not a Dreadful God."
And tonight, oh, Mighty God,
I do not know what to do—

On my knees I weep and pray,
If my gentle child is wrong,
Oh, Thou Great and Jealous God!
If he knows not what he does,
God, forgive my wayward child!
He is kind and he is good,
He has never troubled me;
He is but a little child,
God, forgive him for his sins.
But, oh, Great and Mighty God,
If my gentle child is right,
If I need not be afraid,
Oh, Thou Great and Gentle God!
If my strange and wandering child
Truly is beloved of You—
God, what of my other children?
They were pretty babies, too.

Lament of Mary Magdalene

DOWN the hill and back to town—
How can I leave you where you be?
What can I do to get you down?
I can not reach your bleeding crown,
I can not climb to set you free!
I can not follow after Thee.

Down the hill and through the town—
Thou the king and I the clown,
Mine the thorns and Thine the crown,
Lord, I am lonely after Thee,
Bearing the cross Thou gavest me.

Down the hill and through the town—
Alone—alone and fancy free!
Bearing my own Gethsemane.

The Little Daughter of Doom

NO matter what bright way she turned,
Her laughter darkened the sunlit sky;
Hers was a light that only burned
To mark a shadow passing by.

A sleeplessness that put to sleep,
A hunger to feast the need of man—
How could she laugh who had to weep
As only the laughing can?

The Secret Singer

I'VE kept my songs to my singing self
I've worked and wept with the world,
I've heard the call of a prancing elf
While the kettle steam uncurled;

I've seen the clouds across the sky
The while I watched my baking bread,
I've listened to my neighbor's cry—
And heard the wind instead!

The Beggar Queen is Weaving at Her Tapestry

TWINE my dusky hair with diamonds,
Bind me round with cloth of gold;
Bring me strings of pearls and rubies,
Tell me tales of knights of old,
Kings were brave and kings were bold;
Myrrh and incense—I remember
I have shivered with the cold!

Black brocade and white of ermine,
Put your crown upon my head—
Never think I have forgotten
I have worn my rags instead!
Queens may laugh—but clowns remember
They have wept for want of bread.

The Fisherwife's Lullaby

SHALL I throw my wares to the thousand winds!
Shall I sell my soul to the sea?
Or do the way my neighbors say—
That never did care for me?

There's a fat one here and a thin one there
And a lean across the way,
And they bite their nails and they tell their tales
As the sea goes down to the spray;

And they tell their tales as the thin white sails
Go down to the far white sea,
And I nod my head at the things they said—
That never did care for me.

And I wonder why as the seas go by
And the thin sails dip and clear,
And I rock my load by the winding road
That ever goes by me here.

To the sails that list with the sea's gray mist,
To the hulls that drift with the tide;
And the sullen roar of the lean black shore
Where the lean white sea gulls ride;

To the ships that roam and the ships come home,
To the ships that lift with their load;
To the wonder why as the days go by,
And the song by the far white road;

To the rise and swell of the things they tell,
To the lies of the things they hear;
And the sun's red ball and the sea gull's fall,
And the fish that flash in the weir—

Oh, they spin and spar with the things that are,
And they haggle the things that be,
And they bite their thread to the lies they said,
That never did care for me!

And there's none knows why as the sea gulls cry
And I rock my weary load—
And I wait me here while the world goes by,
Like a wall by a winding road.

The Decent Woman Speaks

KEEP my body still,
Like a wounded thing a-dying;
Lie here steady with my will,
Hold my hungry body still
That none may hear its crying—
And it will soon be dying.

Neighbor

NOW that she is buried deep,
I wonder what she's left behind?
I wonder where she used to keep
The want she dreamed of in her sleep—
The laughter she could never find—
The doubt that preyed upon her mind.

Witch

BOUND to the stake her body was,
Forever burned by the tortured flames
Of her own consuming fire;
Hungry, hungry, reaching high—
Watch her writhe and hear her cry!
Screaming, screaming—let her die
Of the shame of her own desire!
Tied to the stake her body was
On her own funeral pyre.

Hungry, hungry, parched and dry,
Still and gray her ashes lie,
Burned by her own unquenchèd fire—
Dead of her own desire.

The Daughters of Eve

WHY must we always be waiting and weeping!
Why will our want never leave us alone?
Why do we lie while our lovers are sleeping
And cry for the quiet we never have known?
What is the wrong we must always be reaping,
What have we done we can never atone—
That we should ever be waiting and weeping,
That we must always be wanting alone?

The Masterpiece

SO He made woman last—a melody
Kin to the music of the great unknown,
A delicate and monstrous symphony,
Most beautiful in its inharmony;
A work of wondrous dissonance and tone,
Most terrible in its simplicity;
A mighty laughter and a mighty moan
Of harmony and discord and damnation,
Of tears and song, desire and frustration,
To carry on forever and alone
The grim and awful burden of creation—
A thing of tortured flesh and writhing bone,
A beast to bear the load that is His own.

Sweet Briar

BITTER Sweet Briar Bush, how you've betrayed me!
I, who believed that your beauty was kind,
I, who believed every vow that you made me
Was true as the blush you were hiding behind!

Bitter Sweet Briar Bush, faint your perfuming,
Pale were your petals like pure little hearts—
Should I have known that the sweeter the blooming
The thicker the thorns and the deeper the darts?

Bitter Sweet Briar Bush, I do not blame you,
I have so loved you I leave you alone,
But had I believed all the grief that I name you
There's bitter sweet beauty I never had known—
And though you deceived me, I still will acclaim you
The loveliest grieving that ever was grown!

Magic

O H, sure I know the shepherd lad
Is letting down the bars!
The swallows fly against the sun
And sing the day is just begun—
Oh, sure I know the barefoot one
Is letting down the bars!

And sure I know the farmer boy
That merry milks the cows!
The sun is low upon the hill
And wakes the drowsy whippoorwill—
Oh, sure I know my laddie still,
That merry milks the cows.

But now the night comes down the strand,
And creeps across the pastureland—
It finds the barefoot shepherd's hand
Is letting down the bars;
The shadow lengthens in from sea
And hides the dark beneath the tree—
Oh, sure my love is strange to me
Against a night of stars!

Blindness

SEA green and deep green
And pale lotus petal,
Tell me how the stars shine
Underneath the sea?
Black water, white water,
Falling through my fingers,
Gleaming for a moment
Where the light can never be;
White wave and black wave
And pale water lily,
And rainbows that are following
Between the night and me—
Oh, tell me what you see!

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White wave and black wave
And pale water lily,
And rainbows that are following
Between the night and me—
Oh, tell me what you see!

Sight

MY thoughts think through to troublous things,
They will not let me be—
I close my eyes in need of rest,
But the eyes of my thoughts still see,
They will look through to the heart of you,
And through to the heart of me.

1929

WE long for purple distances
Seen only from afar.
We think we want the nearness
Of a million-pointed star.
And reason is unreason
While we are what we are.

Tardy

AND so I set you free," he said,
"For now at last I see
"A soul that laughs should never have been chained."

"And now you set me free," she said,
"As the dead at last are free.
"You do not know a laugh that's lost
"Can never be regained."

Harvester

AND will this body cease to thirst
Because I drink a bitter wine,
Because I sow a blighted seed
And tend an empty pod?

And will this hunger cease to whine
Because I ploughed a creed accursed,
And will I know no more of need
Because I reaped a barren god?

The Garden Walk

GRIEF stalks in my dooryard,
Another year of lies
And I have lived a little while the longer;
Another laughter I have cried,
Another death that I have died,
And I am just a bit more tired—
And folks will say a little stronger,
And I have lived for a little longer.

Grief stalks in my dooryard,
Thin and frail by the dust of the crumbling wall,
Dark and still by the grave of the death of living,
Steady and sure—
And I am not here at all—
But only a ghost that waits by a crumbling wall.

COLUMBIA MO.

Surrender

NOW for a little moment if it please you,
I see your mad eyes blazing
In the pallor of your face,
And hear again your wild insistent pleading
Like tortured wings that beat
Against the blindness of a place
That has been walled too high to let the light in!
Now for a little while and if it please you—
I feel again your mad and tortured beating
And answer you because you can not hear me
And know me yours because you are not near.

Sprite

BIND me fast within thy thrall,
Dear Love, don't let me go;
I am wild beyond recall—
Beat my wings against the wall!
Ah, no! . Ah, no!
Dear Lover, let me go!

The Laughing Hour

THERE was a time—a little while,
A little laughing hour or two,
I looked into your lovely smile
And thought I knew the whole of you;
Only a little hour or two—
And bitter-sweet and deadly rue.

The Broken Flight

THIS way you can forget me—
You have known
Only another butterfly
That had, perhaps, a broken wing,
Only another singing bird
That was, perchance, afraid to sing;
A bit of laughter that had flown,
A flame that never would be blown,
A frightened puppet that had grown
Too weary of its weight of string—
You will forget me,
Who have known
A bit too much of everything.

The Dark of the Moon

I LAUGHED and let you go,
Another time

I might have wept and held you by my side;
So are our lives but drift of ebb and flow,
That writhe and twist and turn
And never know—
And can not change the shifting of the tide.

Drip

SOMETHING of me died the day you left me,
I had been whole of death until that time;
And bit by bit since then I have forgotten
The sound of your sure laughter,
And the way you had
Of looking at a little thing that pleased you.
I can not quite be sure
The words you said
The day we found the daisy in the field
And it was early for it to have been there;
I am no longer certain what you were—
And to have known
And to have then forgotten!
Surely forgetting is the thing that death is.

Torch

I'M frightened and lost who but now was behind you,
Hungry and wandering and weeping alone!
What have I done I no longer can find you—
Hunting my way through the ghosts I have known?

Where have you gone I can not follow after,
Crying my tears in the darkness of night?
Reach me your hand, dear, or call me your laughter—
I who have lost you have need of your light.

MY body cries for you
Tonight

Alone

I feel your lack like pronged and cringing pain

I lie so still

No breath of dark about me

Could guess that sleep is not upon my eyelids

So calm is death

No hush of night could know

I have a need of what I had

Again

Epitaph

I DO not ask you to be true to me,
I We can be true but to ourselves alone;
Life is a many limbed and leafing tree
Bent in the wind however the wind may be,
'Tis only death can be forever known.

I do not ask you to be anything,
Life is a winter and another spring;
I would not tell the song thrush what to sing,
I would not stay the storm cloud on the sea.

Forever groping, restless, and ungrown—
I would not have you lie like a bleached bone
Ended and stark and never to be free;
I could not ask a living thing to be
Still and assured, serene, and wholly known
Beneath a chiselled lifetime on a stone!

Ebb

I DREAMED last night the sea was out in Glengareef,
A lull was on the weather and the moon was on the
wane;
The high flood tide that climbed the reeks when we were
there—
When we were there together and the moon was on the
gain—
The dark blue pool that climbed the reefs when we were
there
Was gray against the sagging ledge and dull beneath the
rain
And seaweed dragged upon its edge like sleet against the
pane;
I dreamed last night the tide was out in Glengareef,
The sea was gone in Glengareef and would not come again.

Essence

YES, you are there among my griefs,
Like scented rose leaves in a jar;
Like hallowed ashes that will lie
Where lovely heads have lain.
Yes, you are there—
And here am I
With things that were and things that are,
And gathered petals that are dead
And will not live again.

Dawn

LATELY I think I must have learned
The truth I could not bear to know;
Too many nights my candle's burned
Down the black pane till day returned,
Too many times it's flickered low—
Tonight I think I have to know.

The Last Juror

OH, I have loved a lot of lads,
And one was never like another;
And I have seen a lot of things
Were never quite the same.

Oh, I have listened to the cries
Of babes that wanted for their mother,
And I have heard their mothers weep
For babes were wanting for a name—
And they were never quite the same.

Perspective

AN angel stood on the jagged ledge
That shadows the edge of the world,
And watched a writhing battle field
Where righteous torture swirled—
And while a mighty conqueror
Mused greedy on a map,
And while a foolish monarch played
With chestnuts in his lap,
A million pretty soldier lads
Marched proudly off to fight,
A million weeping widow brides
Prayed lonely prayers at night—
And, watching all the world at war,
The angel wondered why
Men thought it brave to play with death
When they were sure to die.

SACCO AND VANZETTI

Law

NOW once again the monster rears its head
And crawls its greedy way across the world;
Now once again the jaws are dripping red
And claws are bleeding with the recent dead—
And, satiate once more, the beast has curled
Its sleeping body back upon its bed.

Wake

I AM ashamed of weeping and of words,
They are the little way
For little woes
To swagger for a while and find their ease;
They are the empty way
For frightened souls
To clamor and be still.

Dirge

IT is too much to know a million men
Can make no footprint on the bleeding world,
It is too hard for humankind to learn
A million million cries can but return
Into the emptiness whence they were hurled—
And wait a little while and cry again.

Elegy

IF in the past at times I have forgotten,
If I have hoped the world was such a place
That men might live and laugh beneath the sun
And lay them down to rest when day was done—
If in the past at times I have forgotten,
Now nevermore again shall I forget,

Bunker Hill
August 1927

WE'LL plant our guns upon this hill
Lest men should hear their voices crying!
We'll point our guns upon this hill—

I wonder what makes them so still?
'Tis evil winds that blow but ill!
Is that a wind that's sighing?

Behind our guns upon this hill—
I wonder what makes men so still
When other men are dying?

'Tis but the wind that's crying!

The Last Thanksgiving Massachusetts 1927

COME let us sit around the sagging board,
And breathing deep of thick and fattened smells,
Let's bow our heads and thank our Gentle Lord
For all the food He's set before us now;
For eggs from out the breeded hen,
And cream from out the branded cow;
For gravies brown and reeking turkeys
Fed throughout the year,
And puddings spiced and sauces red,
And ciders sparkling thin and clear,
Come let us thank our Murdered Lord
For what He gives us here—
And lift our wagging heads in righteous greed
And lick our chops and pat ourselves
And feed.
Come let us thank our Weeping Lord for what we do not
need.

And know that we have done our best
To still a Jealous God,
And paid Him well for roasted fowl
And fish upon the rod;
For did we not, a threemonths past, put souls beneath the
sod—
Burn two live men and bury them
Deep down within their grave,
Because they would not thank the Lord for what He
never gave?



Victory!

A MILLION crosses stood on a hill,
A deadly wood against the sky;
An open grave a wound to kill,
A million lads that would be still—
A million lovely lads that lie
Where they can never die.
And who are you,
And who am I—
That we should walk about at will,
And a million other lads should lie
Under a hill beneath the sky?

Cocoon

GOD, I am tired of lies!
Endlessly endlessly winding
Weaving their intricate threads
Around and around me forever
Spinning their infinite webs
Twisting and twining about me
Binding me fast in a shroud—
Where the womb of the dead will have found me.

Invitation

I STOOD alone upon the shore,
Upon the bleak and barren shore,
And saw the years that are no more
Go down into the sea;
And saw the empty years go by
Like thin, forgotten ghosts that cry,
That beat against the wind and cry,
And try to break the door
That opened once before.

The thin, gray years go down to sea
And turn their empty eyes on me,
Their thin, forgotten eyes, and cry,
"Come try! Come on and try!"

Assault

THIS mad, unrhythmic, writhing train,
These cries chaotic and caroused,
Have ravaged my distorted brain
Where, all unwanted, they are housed;
Have ravished tortured silence there
Till, pregnant of an old despair,
She trails her weary time along
And gives triumphant birth to song!

The Empty House

AND if you seek a place to rest a while,
Then leave me swiftly!

Oh, believe me, go!

I am a shell down underneath the sea,
An emptiness that twists and turns and writhes
Unceasingly beneath the ceaseless tide,
Forever lonely and forever free;
A drifting death no one may ever know,
That shifting rocks forever to and fro
Upon the bed of night's eternity;
A singing sound that never more can be
A home for anything alive or dead.

Prophet

WHAT should I tell you more?
Have I not said

That green things grow again another year
And trees are tall with pruning?

Have I not told

That for a little while

Our tears will matter much,

And then grow old,

And we will be too weary of old weeping?

Let me alone

For I have said enough;

For I have said

That birth is born of death

And there is no such thing

As life and living—

Only a waiting

And a while between,

And then a memory

Of sights unseen

And sounds unheard

And truths that have never been there.

Let me alone

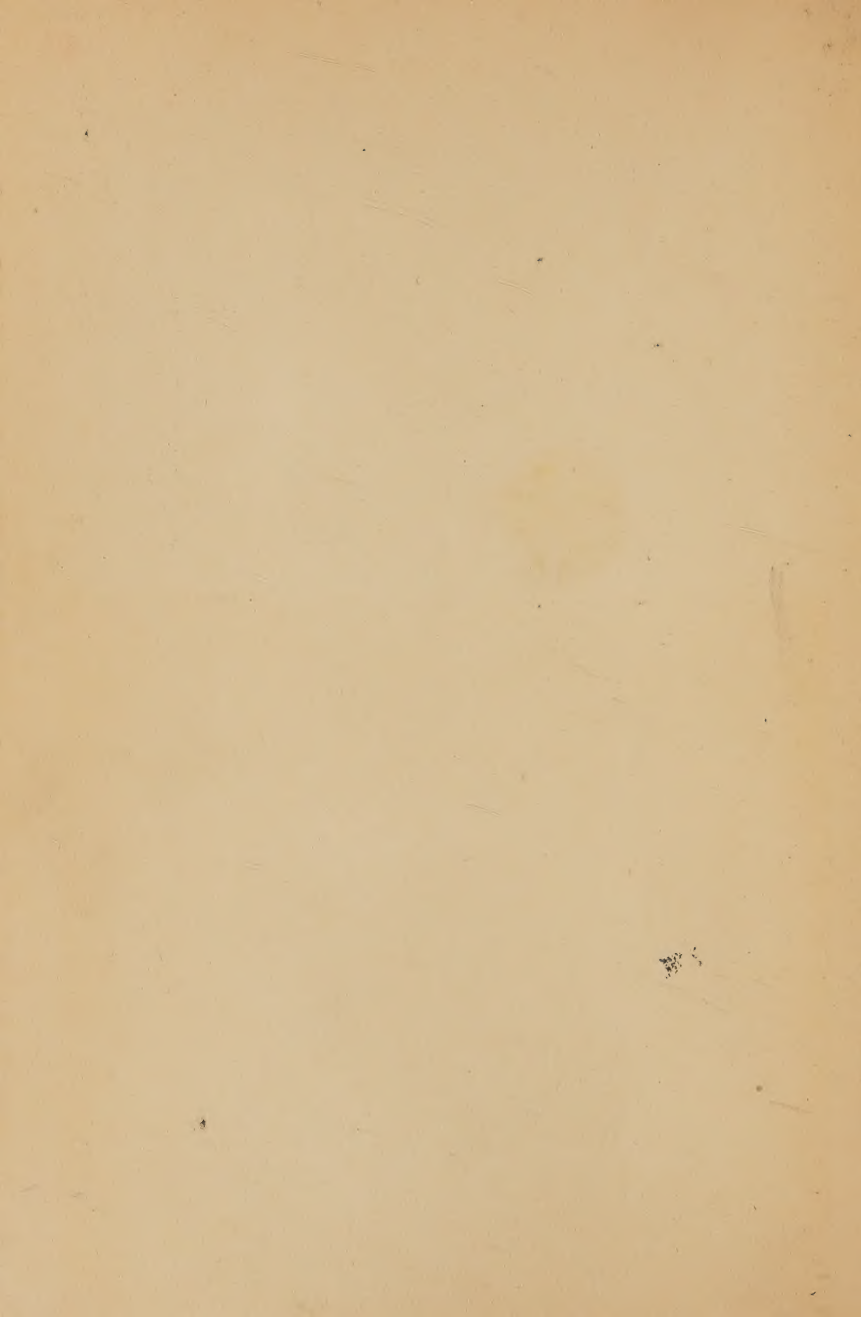
For I have said too much.

Nurselings

OH, my little crying songs,
What is to become of you?
Your mother sits a-weeping,
She's no time to tend your years.

Oh, my hungry baby songs,
Whatever will your mother do!
She's nothing for your keeping,
But the falling of her tears.





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Millay, Kathleen.

The hermit thrush



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